

Juan Pérez Agirrekoia

Do You Want a Master? You Will Have It!

10 October 2012 - 25 February 2013



Drawing series *Do You Want a Master? You Will Have It!* (detail), 2012. Charcoal on paper. 100 x 75 cm.

“The real buffets you continually, and art is a way to manage and negotiate the anguish it causes you,” affirms Juan Pérez Agirrekoia. The title of his exhibition refers back to the words of the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in his reflections on the “discourse of the master”. Through two pictorial series (charcoal drawing and watercolor), shown in Espacio Uno (Space One), and two animations screened in the Sala de Protocolo (Protocol Room), Agirrekoia invites us into the scenario where “the real” emerges as that which human discourse tends to conceal or render symbolic: violence, sex, the death instinct.

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Do You Want a Master? You Will Have It! displays images whose hermeticism, like the title's, contrasts with their immediacy. They are family scenes held up to the viewer's gaze, but at the same time they refer to that which tends not to be expressed in words: violence, degradation, obscenity, terror – everything, that is, which Lacan grouped around the concept of "the real", and which is left in the gutter of each discourse. It is what cannot be symbolized or reduced to a sign owing to the potency with which it emerges from the human psyche, yet it is *there*, and its presence is a strong one.

After inviting us to enter "a world of pain" in the first room, the artist sets up a dialogue between two pictorial friezes. In the upper one, he likens the behavior of a human being to that of a dog, the animal most closely linked in the collective unconscious to the idea of a "master". Superimposed on the nightmare of the wild dog with a capacity to kill is the process of training, while similarly imposed upon the human being is its master: the State and culture in all its forms. The crepuscular image of three public personalities makes up the lower frieze. The death instinct, a taboo absent from every verbal discourse, emerges here in the body language of the old man. The title of this second frieze, *Mutar* ('Mutate'), generates eloquent connections with Lacan's discourse. Characters who have been associated with forms of political, aristocratic or sexual power here mutate towards their conversion into human ruins. The master, who once established the laws to be obeyed and exercised dominance as an example of excessive and authoritarian vitality, has been tamed by means of watercolor. However, this sweetening of the images is not intended to erase the dreadful *memento mori* they exude. On the contrary, it underscores it. The two series are exhibited on the top and bottom strips of the wall, and so on the periphery of the space where the viewer is accustomed to seeing art works. The area of the main discourse, the center, is empty. It is a white wall, and the attention has to be directed away from it. As Lacan put it, the real is displaced, but it *is there*.

Completing the show are two projections in the Sala de Protocolo (Protocol Room). They engage in a dialogue with the previous room based on a critique of culture as a way of taming the socially perturbing. The phenomenon of skaters, born as a creative proposal for reformulating the inert elements of the city, is today integrated in the system, as can be seen from the logos on their once speechless boards, which used to bear solely the illegible sign of the scratches caused by use. In the meantime, the generation which rebels, swollen with freedom, destroys old icons but generates new masters. "Culture is one of the most pathetic things that exist," says Agirrekoikoa. "Our destiny will largely depend on our geopolitical location, and on the wealth and antiquity of the one which has fallen to us by luck. For instance, when Rauschenberg erases De Kooning, that's a work of art, and when the Taliban wipe the Buddhas off the map, they're savages [...]. Culture should not be confused with education, although the boundary is usually impossible to define. [...] It's re-education that gives us the keys to escape from the traps that they lay for us, and which we fall into."

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Museum hours
Monday to Saturday
from 10:00 a.m.
to 9:00 p.m.
Sundays from
10:00 a.m.
to 7:00 p.m.*
(*From 2:30 p.m.
onwards only the
Collection galleries
can be visited)
Closed Tuesdays

Galleries close
15 minutes
prior to Museum
closing

Images
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